SUBJECTS.

III. *Forests.*

29. *Abolition or reduction of duty on fuel.*

Mr. K. R. Parameswaren Pillai (Member, Kottayam Taluk) referred to the four different and successive notifications issued recently in regard to the cess on fuel removed from unreserved forests, the first relating to the levy of a fee of one rupee per ton, the second to the suspension of the fee for six months, the third to the levy of four annas till the end of 1082, and the fourth and existing notification relating to the levy of a fee of one rupee per ton, if for local consumption, and of one rupee and eight annas, if for export. He said that there has not been a fixed policy in the matter, that the notification was defective in principle and the cess unnecessary and harmful. Fuel is a necessity with everybody, the demand for which has been gradually increasing and the supply of which decreasing. Unreserved forests are interspersed with private properties, and for want of specification could not be identified. There was, therefore, the difficulty in distinguishing fuel removed from either place and the possibility of the subordinates of the Forest department levying fee on all cartloads indiscriminately. The exemption regarding headloads only led to evasion of the rule. In these circumstances, he requested that the cess might be abolished.

Mr. H. Mahadeva Iyer (Member, S. M. R. V. Association, Trivandrum) referred to the high price of fuel, which has risen to seven times what it was 40 years ago, to the expense incurred in travelling great distances before the firewood dealer could come by his supply; to the petty exactions, all along the route, of needy forest guards and watchers; to the large drain on the existing supply by export to foreign markets; and last but not least, to the recent introduction of fees. The hardship caused by this sudden rise in value was being keenly felt by the poor and the lower section of the middle classes, by far the great majority of His Highness' subjects. Fuel being, under present conditions of life, a prime necessity, he said that the abolition of the fee on fuel used for consumption within the State would be a real boon and much appreciated.

Mr. Raman Tampi (Member, Eraniel Taluk) said that the cess was a source of very great hardship to the people, that the poor ryots were being driven to the necessity of cutting down trees they had planted for purposes of manure and that, even if Government sustained heavy loss, such loss would be more than counterbalanced by the great boon which the people might enjoy by the abolition of the cess.

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SUBJECTS.

Mr. T. Kumara Pillai (Member, Kalkulam Taluk) referred to the special suffering in south Travancore and to the clog placed on cultivation by the diminution of agricultural manure, as the trees near habitations were being cut and used as fuel.

Mr. G. Sankaranarayana Iyer and *Mr. Subramonia Karayalan* (Members, Shencottah Taluk) supported the previous speakers.

Dewan's reply.— In the case of reserved forests, there is now a duty of one rupee per ton ; and in the case of unreserved forests, the duty is one rupee per ton, if the fuel is removed for local consumption, and one rupee and eight annas per ton if the fuel is removed for export. Government do not consider these rates excessive and are not prepared to abolish or reduce the duty. It is observed that head-loads are now free.

30. *Exclusion from reserves of tracts near cultivated areas.*

Mr. M. Madhavan Tampi (Member, Kalkulam Taluk) requested that forest tracts bordering on inhabited and cultivated areas should be excluded from reserves. The inclusion of such tracts was not contemplated by the Forest Regulation. He said that the proximity of such reserved areas was causing great injury and mischief, as wild beasts, such as tigers, came down on the human habitations close by. He added that tracts, where teak and blackwood capable of yielding a good revenue could not be grown, were being reserved, and said he could, if necessary, furnish a list of the localities which should be excluded from the reserves.

Dewan's reply.—Government think that it would be retrograde policy to disafforest areas once reserved. All forest reservation is made after due enquiry and if we now begin to disafforest reserved areas, there will be no finality, and the tendency will then always be to put back the boundaries of forests, because cultivation has extended up to those boundaries. The member may send in a list, as moderately framed as possible, of the forests which he considers very objectionable and Government will ask the Peishkars whether the grievances alleged are sufficiently serious to warrant disafforestation. I may, however, tell you that the policy of Government will be not to adopt such a course except on very special grounds.

31. *Supply of manure leaves and timber for agricultural implements.*

Mr. M. Madhavan Tampi also requested that specified areas should be notified in the Gazette and thrown open to the general public for the free supply of manure leaves and timber for agricultural implements.

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